

How to use this book

Here are some suggestions for using this book. They have been made as explicit as possible for the guidance of users with little or no previous experience of pronunciation teaching. The book can however be used in many different ways and experienced teachers of spoken English will develop new ways of their own for working with it.

A Elementary class teaching

- 1 The teacher reads, carefully but naturally, the simple examples. (e.g. 'a tree . . .', 'three leaves . . .', 'a bee . . .', 'a sheep . . .', while the class listen.) Their attention will at this stage be largely concentrated on the picture.
- 2 The teacher reads the examples again. This time the pictures are covered up and the class watch the teacher's face. Their attention is thus switched to the sound and articulation of the words.
- 3 The examples are read a third time. This time the class look at the pictures and the wording. They thus make a preliminary and approximate association of sound, sense and written word form.
- 4 The teacher re-reads the first example. The pupils repeat it together. The example is read and imitated again. The second example is then read, and so on. If the group impression is correct, most individuals will benefit by comparing their immediate hearing of their own pronunciation and that of the group, to which they will tend to conform. Care must be taken however that an incorrect 'group accent' is not allowed to develop. This danger is, of course, greatest in classes composed of pupils who all have the same mother tongue.
- 5 Each member of the class in turn takes an example, working through them in order (so that numbers 1, 5, 9 say 'a tree', 2, 6, 10 'three leaves', etc.). The teacher should respond to any unacceptable pronunciation by repeating the model. If the pupil does not then correct his fault, it should be noted for later treatment, especially if a meaningful contrast (e.g. i:/ɪ) appears not to be observed. As a general rule, however, it does not seem advisable to lose pace by dwelling on an individual's incapacity for simple imitation. Such cases require more systematic teaching.

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Excerpt

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6 At this point, the vocabulary, being simple and concrete, can be used in simple structures for repetition, e.g. 'Here is a tree', 'Here are three leaves', 'Here is a bee', 'Here is a sheep', 'There is (are) . . .', 'This/that is . . .', 'These/those are . . .'. In addition such questions as 'Is this a tree?', 'Yes, it's a tree'; 'Is this a bee?', 'No, it's a sheep'; 'Which is a bee?', 'This is a bee' can be asked.

7 After dealing with the simple examples, the phrases are treated. These are best built up element by element; thus: 'a fleet . . . (a fleet)', 'a fleet at sea (a fleet at sea)'.

8 This building principle applies particularly to the longer sentences; thus: 'Stephen', 'Stephen meets Eve', 'Stephen meets Eve one evening', 'Stephen meets Eve one evening for a meal'. To a large extent, the sentences are designed like the example given, so that they can be built up from left to right. Sometimes a less straightforward order is required; thus on p. 15, 'a witch', 'a wicked witch', 'which is a wicked witch?', 'which of the women is a wicked witch?', 'which of the six thin women is a wicked witch?' These examples demand more of the teacher but add variety and develop a feeling for syntax.

This technique of expansion is an excellent means of developing a rhythmic sense and the skill of catenation. Pupils who collapse into a non-English rhythm, or stammer and lose all fluency when confronted by longer sentences as indigestible wholes, are delighted to find how far they can get along a sequence built up in this way.

9 The next sound is dealt with in a similar way, and so on.

Minimal pairs

A particular importance attaches to the sound contrasts (e.g. p. 16 i:/ɪ). The most important pronunciation errors are those which involve the loss of a meaningful distinction, since they easily lead to misunderstandings.

Nineteen of the sets most frequently confused by foreign learners have been included at intervals in this book.* The minimal pairs may be used in the following ways:

- a First, the teacher reads each pair: sheep, ship; bean, bin; meal, mill; lead, lid.
- b Secondly, each group: sheep, bean, meal, lead; ship, bin, mill, lid.
- c Thirdly, the teacher reads each pair, which is imitated by the pupil. It is important, however, to realise that pupils who do not make the distinction will in all probability not hear it either, even when the contrast is apparently clearly produced in direct contrast, as above.
- d In order to find out whether this is so, the teacher points to one of the pair and says, for example, 'Is this a ship?' The pupil must say Yes or No, and reveal whether he has identified the word correctly or not. A single question may of course be right by chance. However, five or six rapid questions pointing randomly between the two (e.g. R, L, L, R, L, R, or L, L, R, L, R, L, etc.) will produce a reliable answer.

Alternatively, the teacher may point to a pair and ask: 'Which is a sheep?' 'Which is a ship?' or to the group as a whole, saying: 'Show me the sheep', 'Show me the bird', 'Show me the mill', etc. Clearly these different techniques can be freely combined to prevent tedious repetition.

e Once the pupil is hearing the distinction consistently, it will still be necessary to establish the distinction in his speech. This will usually be easiest in the contrastive pairs themselves. When these are mastered, it may be advisable to go over some of the material given under the individual sounds again. Most difficulty is to be expected where the different sounds co-occur in sentences, but not as simple contrastive pairs. Practice in these is given in the longer phrases and sentences in each page of comparisons. They should be built up in the usual way (see 7 and 8 above).

* On pp. 91–6 a comprehensive list of minimally contrasting word pairs is given, drawn from the complete vocabulary of the book. These pairs are classified according to the order of phonemes in the book, and should provide ample material for practising any distinction confused by learners.

A phonetic transcription is provided for each phrase and sentence given. The modest additional effort involved in learning the symbols is well worth while.

Many pronunciation errors are due, not to the learner's inability to produce the sounds in themselves, but to a mistaken conception of the phonetic composition of words. Such errors are most easily identified by reference to a phonetic transcription. In many cases, it is only necessary for the learner to realise his error for him to be able to correct it. In any case, realisation of the proper phonetic form of the word is an indispensable pre-requisite for overcoming such 'distributional' errors – perhaps the most frequent type of error made by foreign learners.

When set out in detail, the above procedure may look long-winded, especially for a native English teacher who may not realise how difficult a task learners of English have to face. Teachers are nevertheless recommended to start off by following this method, using the humour of the material, variations in tempo within a running rhythm, and their own humanity to keep the pace lively and the lessons enjoyable.

Experienced teachers will of course make short cuts where a class is not expected to find problems, and give more practice where it is needed.

Abundant additional practice material can be drawn from the forward and reverse word indexes on pp. 84–91, and the classified list of minimal pairs on pp. 91–6.

When the material of this book has been mastered, readers are recommended to work with J. D. O'Connor's *Phonetic Drill Reader* (CUP, 1973), in which longer dialogues are skilfully based on particular sounds, contrasts and combinations.

B *Advanced classes*

With advanced students, the pages dealing with single sounds are perhaps best used quite light-heartedly for diagnostic purposes, and catenation exercises, allowing conversation to develop out of the visual humour,

particularly the exploitation of British cultural stereotypes. The contrastive pairs can be used for remedial purposes as described above.

Teachers and students of English as a foreign language can have the techniques explained, and be made to see their errors objectively in terms of the interference principle, and as paradigmatic for those they will find in their own pupils.

C Students without a teacher

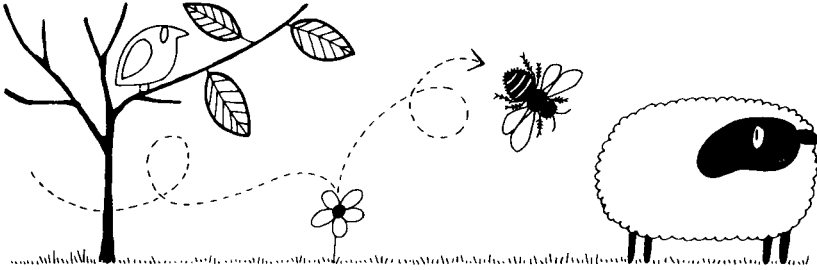
Students who have access to a native English speaker can easily follow the course outlined above for class-work by instructing the speaker to carry out the relatively straightforward actions of the teacher described. With a little practice, it should become quite easy for the native speaker to play the teacher's role, though the student cannot, of course, benefit from the skilled teacher's ability to recognise and analyse errors and to fit special remedies to special cases.

D Students and classes without a good native speaker to act as model

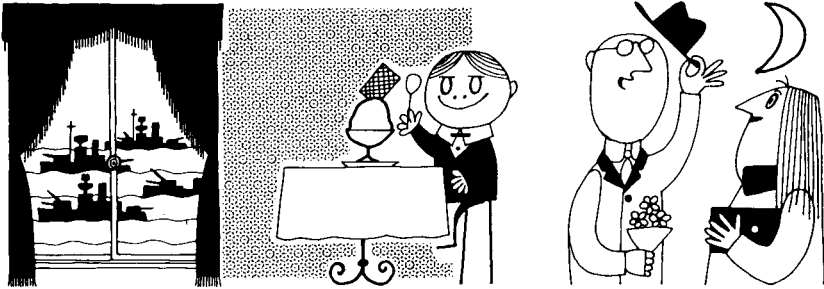
We recommend buying the cassettes or reels on which the complete material of the book is recorded. These may be used in a straightforward language laboratory if transferred to the master track. Preferably the recordings should be managed by a teacher as though a native speaker were present, in accordance with the procedure detailed above, or worked into a programmed form by editing.

E Speech therapists and teachers of English as a mother tongue

Adult aphasics will find the pictures, being simple but not too childish, of help in re-establishing links between concepts, sounds and spellings. The systematic sound contrasts will also be useful for work with dyslalics, and also, if so desired, in showing differences between the sound pattern of received pronunciation and the various regional pronunciations of English.



a tree three leaves a bee a sheep
 ə 'tri: 'θri: 'li:vz ə 'bi: ə 'ʃi:p



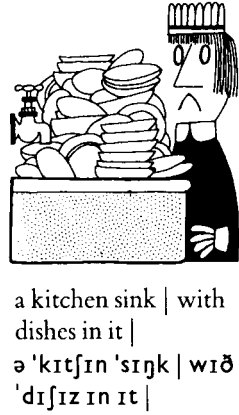
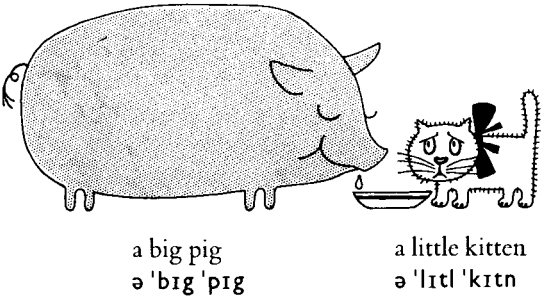
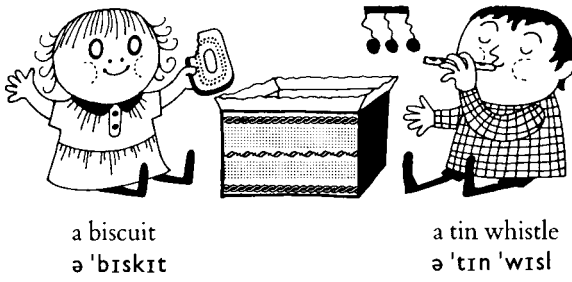
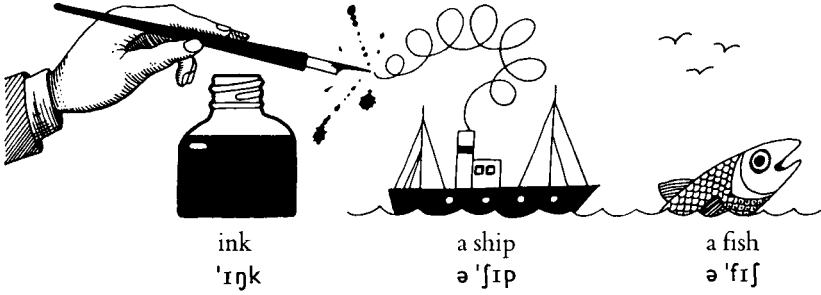
a fleet at sea ice cream for tea Stephen | meets Eve |
 ə 'fli:t ət 'si: 'aɪs 'kri:m fə 'ti: one evening | for a meal
 'sti:v n | mi:t s 'i:v |
 'wʌn 'i:vnɪŋ | fə ə 'mi:l



Stephen | is greedy. | He eats |
 three pieces | of cheese |
 'sti:v n | ɪz 'ɡri:dɪ | hi i:ts |
 'θri: 'pi:sɪz | əv 'tʃi:z |

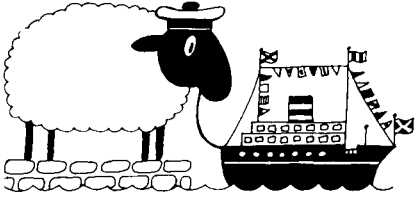


Asleep, | Stephen dreams | of Eve. | He sees Eve fleeing | from three beasts |
 ə'sli:p | 'sti:v n 'dri:mz | əv 'i:v | hi: 'si:z 'i:v | 'fli:ɪŋ | frəm 'θri: 'bi:sts |



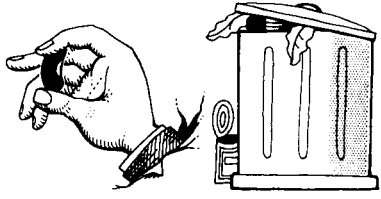
Which | of the six | thin women | is a wicked witch? |
 'wɪtʃ | əv ðə 'sɪks | 'θɪn 'wɪmɪn | ɪz ə 'wɪkɪd 'wɪtʃ |

/ɪ



a sheep
ə 'ʃi:p

a ship
ə 'ʃɪp



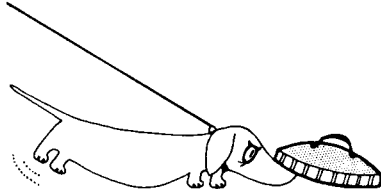
a bean
ə 'bi:n

a bin
ə 'bɪn



a meal
ə 'mi:l

a mill
ə 'mɪl



a lead
ə 'li:d

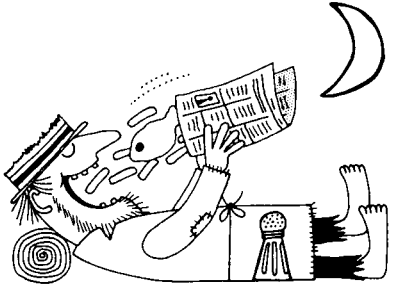
a lid
ə 'lɪd



Jean likes gin. | ... but gin doesn't like Jean ! |
 'dʒi:n ,laɪks 'dʒɪn | bət 'dʒɪn 'dʌznt ,laɪk 'dʒi:n |

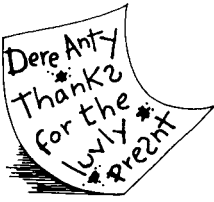
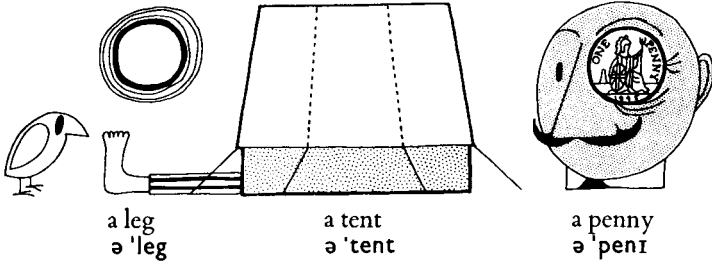


Sleepy Freda | seeks size
 six slippers | to fit her feet |
 'sli:pɪ 'fri:də | ,si:ks 'saɪz
 'sɪks 'slɪpəz | tə 'fɪt hɜ: 'fi:t |

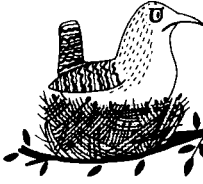


Fish | and chips | are cheap |
 and easy to eat |
 'fɪʃ | ən 'tʃɪps | ə 'tʃi:p |
 ənd 'i:zɪ tʊ 'i:t |

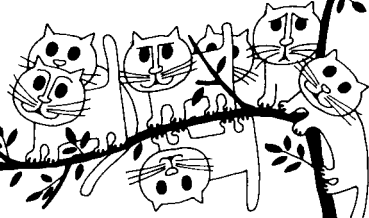
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a letter
ə 'letə



a wren's nest
ə 'renz ,nest



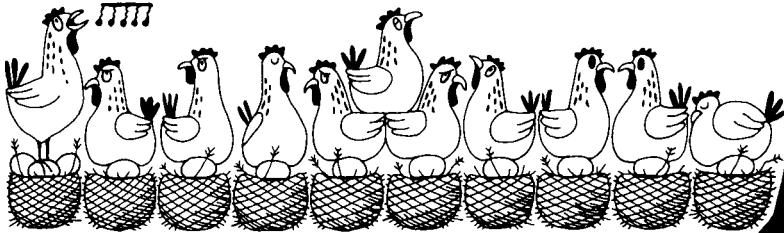
seven pets
'sevn 'pets



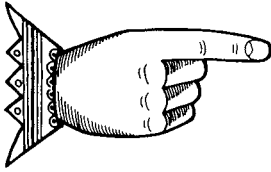
a treasure chest
ə 'treʒə ,tʃest

ten well-dressed men
'ten 'wel 'drest 'men

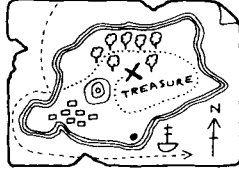
a wedding-dress
ə 'wedɪŋ ,dres



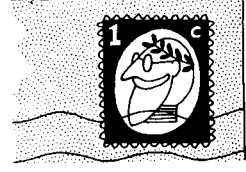
eleven hens | with twelve eggs | in ten nests |
 i'levn 'henz | wɪð 'twelv 'egz | ɪn 'ten 'nests |



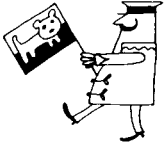
a hand
 ə 'hænd



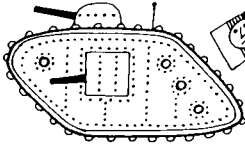
a map
 ə 'mæp



a stamp
 ə 'stæmp



a flag
 ə 'flæg



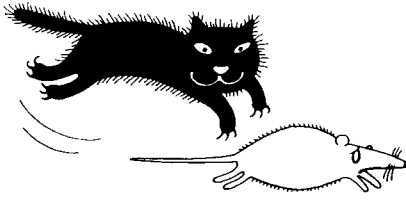
a tank
 ə 'tæŋk



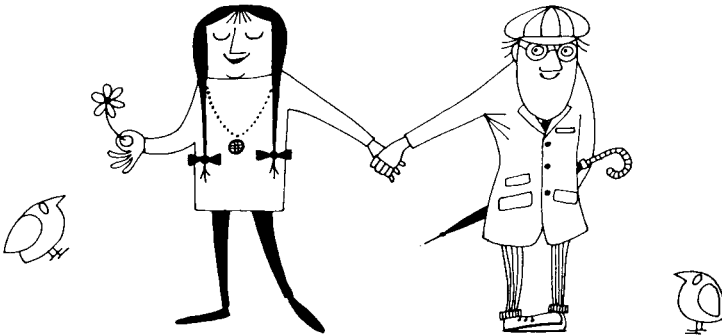
a jazz band
 ə 'dʒæz ,bænd



a fat man | clapping | his hands |
 ə 'fæt 'mæn | 'klæpɪŋ | ɪz 'hændz |



a black cat | catching a fat rat |
 ə 'blæk 'kæt | 'kætʃɪŋ ə 'fæt 'ræt |



Anne | has plaits | and black slacks. | Harry | has a hacking jacket
 Harry and Anne | are standing | hand-in-hand |
 'æn | hæz 'plæts | ən 'blæk 'slæks | 'hæri | ,hæz ə 'hækɪŋ ,dʒækɪt |
 'hæri ənd 'æn | ə 'stændɪŋ | 'hænd ɪn 'hænd |